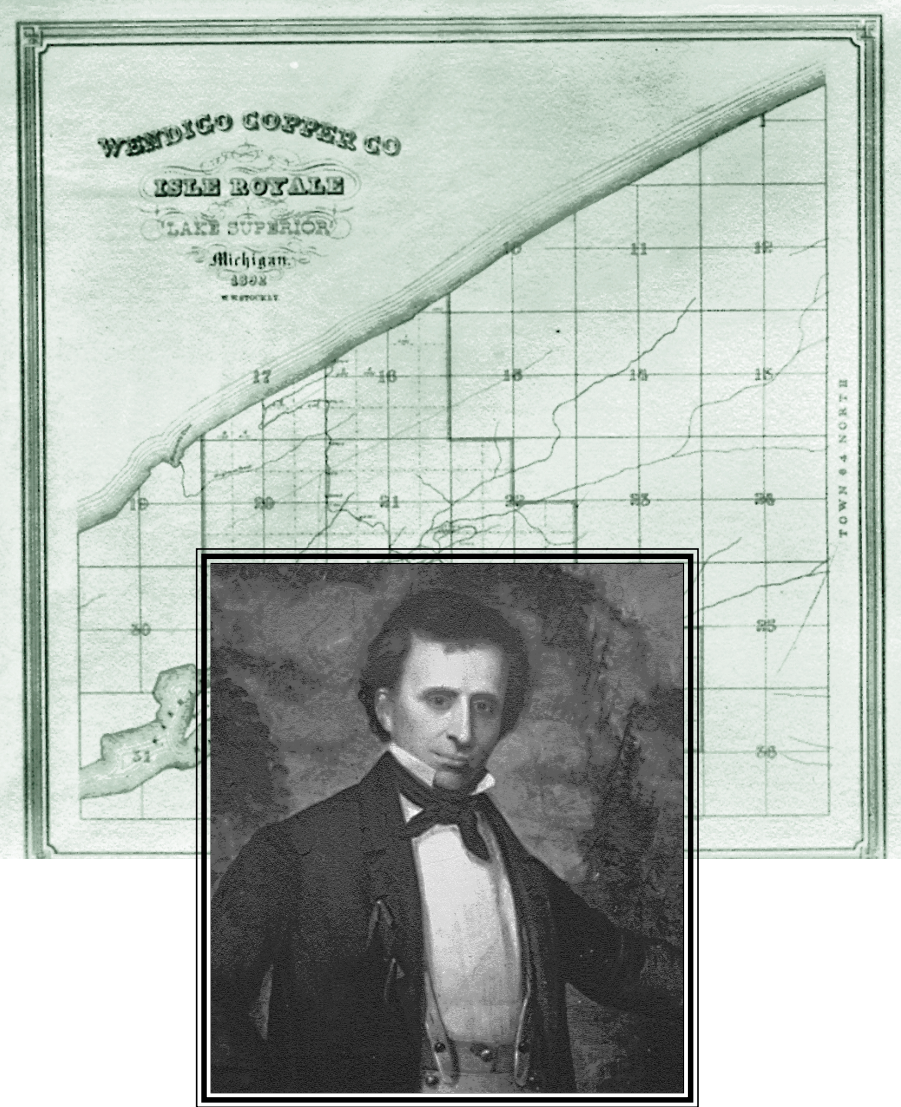


# Early Geological Explorations of Isle Royale



Douglass Houghton

THE SAME FORCES THAT CREATED the world’s largest freshwater lake, Lake Superior, and its largest island, Isle Royale, bequeathed gifts of minerals that humans would later seek. Copper deposits on Isle Royale garnered interest as early as 1670. One of the earliest brief written accounts on the geology of the island was from a Jesuit missionary, Father Claude Dablon. He wrote, “to the West is found the island which is most famous for copper, and is called Minong; this is the one in which the metal exists in abundance, and in many places.”

One of the earliest formal reports specifically on the geology of Isle Royale was written by an officer of the British Royal Navy, Commander Henry W. Bayfield. In the early 1820s, Lt. Bayfield conducted a comprehensive survey of Lake Superior and produced the most accurate map of that day. His report to the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec in 1829 covered all of Lake Superior, and contained sections on the geology of Isle Royale.

Douglass Houghton, in July and August of 1840, made a quick trip around Isle Royale and found it to be of high interest geologically. His field notes contain guarded observations about its mineral potential. Houghton wrote about the “very thin veins of native copper, not thicker than a knife blade” that he found in the

Greenstone rock, which he looked upon “as of little importance.” He also noted how frequently specks of copper were found in the rock. Houghton was much more enthusiastic about the fishery resources of Isle Royale; “the chief importance of Isle Royale at present is dependent upon its fisheries... the surrounding waters abound in fish.”

Douglass Houghton was very interested in mapping Isle Royale, but tragically died before he could begin. The task fell to William Ives and Charles Jackson. Jackson was concerned with geological investigation, while the on-the-ground surveying and mapping was Ives’ responsibility. Ives and his crew in 1847 and 1848 spent two full, hard summers of work on the island battling bugs, swamps, and bad weather to complete a grid and produce a fine map. Jackson, on the other hand, focused his attention on the perimeter of the island and the copper mines then in operation. He produced a lengthy report in 1849 that included a short section on Isle Royale.

Jackson’s able assistants, John Foster and Josiah Whitney, succeeded him in his work. Their 1850 report provided a comprehensive summary not just of the geology of Isle Royale but also of the flora and fauna.

**Liz Valencia, Branch Chief of Cultural Resources**

## Rock Harbor Lodge and Windigo Store

Rock Harbor Lodge offers the only lodging accommodations at Isle Royale National Park. Located along the shore of Lake Superior, the Lodge offers rooms with private baths and housekeeping cottages. We invite you to use Rock Harbor Lodge and its American Plan lodging as a base to explore this unique National Park.

### Rock Harbor Lodge

The lodge has four buildings composed of 60 American Plan rooms located along the shoreline of Rock Harbor at the northeast end of Isle Royale. The lodge is open June 11 through September 6. Each room accommodates four and offers a private bath and picture windows overlooking the harbor and surrounding islands.

### Housekeeping Cottages

Twenty duplex housekeeping cottages are located between the Lodge marina and Tobin Harbor. Cottages are open May 27 through September 6. The units accomodate six and are furnished with utensils, dishware, private bath, dressing room, double bed and two bunk beds. Linens, blankets, electric heat and studio-type living area are featured.

### Gift Shop and Dockside Store

The Lodge Gift Shop sells a selection of handcrafted gifts, apparel, photo supplies, postcards, souvenir items, daily fishing licenses, and tackle. The Dockside Store offers standard groceries as well as freeze dried foods, fishing tackle, stove fuel, camping and hiking accessories, boating accessories, showers, laundry facilities, and sundries.

### Lodge Dining Room

To satisfy the appetites of visitors, the dining room offers hearty meals, including fresh Lake Superior Lake Trout. The American Plan includes breakfast, lunch, and dinner in the dining room for lodge guests. Housekeeping guests and park visitors are welcome.

### Marina and Water Taxi

The Rock Harbor Marina has 450 feet of dock space and accommodates boats up to 65 feet. Electrical and fresh water hook-up with sewage pump-out service, gasoline, and diesel fuel are available. The marina also offers canoe and small boat rentals. To assist access into the backcountry, our water taxi can drop off or pick-up island visitors along with their canoes or kayaks at many of the island’s docks.

### Sightseeing and Fishing Charters

Get acquainted with Isle Royale by experiencing a sightseeing trip aboard the *M.V. Sandy* tour boat. Visit the Edison Fishery and historic Rock Harbor Lighthouse, cruise to and hike the trails to

Lookout Louise, Raspberry Island, Minong Mine and Passage Island. If fishing is more your game, have our guides take you to the best places to fish Lake Superior waters. The charter boats are fully equipped and fishing tackle is provided.

### Windigo

Windigo Store is located at the southwestern end of Isle Royale. The store is open June 7 through September 8, selling groceries, cold sandwiches, camping supplies, stove fuel, daily fishing licenses and tackle, gifts and photo supplies. The marina offers gasoline, pump-out service, plus motorboat and canoe rentals. Showers and laundry facilities are located near the store.

**Contact Rock Harbor Lodge for a color brochure and rate schedule.**

**Summer**  
P.O. Box 605  
Houghton, Michigan 49931-0605  
(906) 337-4993  
**Winter**  
NPC General Office  
P.O. Box 27  
Mammoth Cave, Kentucky 42259-0027  
(270) 773-2191  
[www.isleroyaleresort.com](http://www.isleroyaleresort.com)

*The cost for utilities on Isle Royale is much higher than on the mainland. A utility surcharge will be added to the cost of all goods and services provided by Rock Harbor Lodge.*

